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CHIPKO MOVEMENT PIONEER SUNDERLAL BAHUGUNA DEAD

The 94-year-old environmentalist died of Covid-19 at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Rishikesh on Friday

CREMATED WITH FULL STATE HONOURS

Bahuguna had been undergoing treatment in the hospital since May 8. He was cremated with full state honours at the Poornanand Ghat. He, along with other environmentalists, launched Chipko in 1973 in Uttarakhand (then part of UP) as a non-violent social and ecological movement of villagers to protect trees slated for government-backed logging | P7

ROPED IN VILLAGERS TO SAVE FORESTS

- Chipko means to embrace. The activists, mostly led by village women, would hug the trees and stay put often chaining themselves to the trunks so that loggers could not cut them.
- Such protests not only slowed down forest destruction but also brought the issue of deforestation to the public's attention

5,000 km

BAHUGUNA LED A PROTEST MARCH ACROSS HIMALAYAS DURING 1981-1983

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Police personnel stop vehicles and check them for violations during the statewide lockdown, on Nrupathunga Road in Bengaluru on Friday | VINOD KUMAR T

Lockdown extended till June 7 in state

Free treatment for 'black fungus' available at government hospitals, announces CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister B S Yediyurappa on Friday announced an extension of the existing lockdown in the State by another 14 days. Guidelines issued for the existing lockdown will continue to be in place till June 7. The decision was taken based on the technical advisory committee's recommendations to contain the spread of Covid in the State, he said.

"We have taken the decision, keeping people's welfare in mind. This is to stop the spread of Covid at the village level and to save lives. I request citizens to cooperate," Yediyurappa appealed.

"Due to the restrictions we have ordered till May 24, Covid cases are coming under control, but we need to stop the spread at the village level. It has been decided that the lockdown will be extended by another 14 days till 6 am of June 7," he said.

"There will be no restrictions on the interstate and intrastate movement of persons as permitted by the revised guidelines and there will be unrestricted and smooth movement of all types of goods, including empty goods vehicles," said the fresh order issued on Friday evening.

KARNATAKA	MAY 20	MAY 21
Fresh cases	28,869	32,218
Recoveries	52,257	52,581
Deaths	548	353

Chief Secretary P Ravi Kumar told The New Indian Express that the same regulations that are in place currently will continue. Pre-scheduled air, train travel and interstate, intrastate travel for medical emergencies, will be allowed.

"Many districts had stalled inter-district travel of all kinds due to the rise in the number of cases, but that cannot be done. This order supercedes all such local orders banning travel of goods and emergency vehicles," the Chief Secretary said.

CONTINUED ON: P3

COST OF BLACK FUNGUS TREATMENT HIGH: PANEL TOLD CHIEF MINISTER

Following reports of a surge in mucormycosis cases in Karnataka, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Friday announced free treatment at government hospitals. "Since not everybody can afford the treatment for black fungal infection given its costs, the government has decided to provide free treatment at district hospitals," Yediyurappa said. The decision comes after the technical advisory committee and health department officials informed the chief minister that the average cost to treat the condition, depending on the severity, is around Rs 4-7 lakh. "I urge everyone who has recovered from Covid, especially those with immunocompromised conditions, to take all precautions to prevent infection," Yediyurappa said in a statement later.

Gujarat person steals B'luru woman's second dose!

CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

AN elderly woman, a cancer patient and a resident of Vidyaranyapura in Bengaluru, was robbed of her second dose of Covid vaccine as someone in Gujarat has taken the shot which was assigned to her.

With the help of a friend, she tweeted and tagged Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa and Union health ministry with pictures attached to explain her situation.

Prema Jayaram (75), a former employee of Hindustan Machines Tools Ltd and a resident of Maruthi Nagar Layout in Vidyaranyapura, took her first dose at Neha Prakash Hospital on March 16, 2021. She was told to book for the second dose after six weeks.

CONTINUED ON: P5

NATIONWIDE	MAY 20	MAY 21
Fresh cases	2,76,110	2,59,551
Recoveries	3,69,077	3,57,295
Deaths	3,874	4,209

JAB-O-METER
TAKE YOUR SHOT
May 20: 14,56,088 doses
May 21: 13,83,358 doses
TOTAL DOSES: 10,32,07,222

Breather for UP as SC stays HC's 'Ram Bharose' order

KANU SARDA @ New Delhi

A Supreme Court bench on Friday stayed a bunch of orders on Covid management issued by the Allahabad High Court to the Uttar Pradesh government recently, agreeing they were impossible to implement.

It also advised high courts dealing with Covid cases to refrain from dealing with issues that have trans-national and international ramifications, since the top court itself is seized of pan-India matters.

The Allahabad High Court had on May 17 ordered the UP government to upgrade its health facilities on a war footing, specifically directing it to provide two ambulances with ICU facilities to each village within a month.

But a Supreme Court bench comprising Justices Vineet Saran and Bhushan Gavai agreed with the state's position, represented by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, that UP has 97,000 villages and an order of this magnitude was impossible to implement within the HC's deadline.

"We are of the opinion that high courts should normally consider the possibility of execution of their directions. If such directions cannot be implemented, then such orders may not be passed. The doctrine of impossibility is equally applicable to courts," the bench said. It added that the high court's May 17 order can be treated as advice and not directives.

The Allahabad High Court has been scathing in its observations of the state government's handling of the pandemic, going to the extent of saying that the state's healthcare system is *Ram Bharose* (at God's mercy).

Mehta also sought a direction from the bench to transfer all Covid-19 related matters pending in various high courts to benches headed by their respective Chief Justices. "In Allahabad High Court, there are other PILs which are listed before other benches in which notice has been issued. Similar cases in other high courts too. But let such matters be placed before only Chief Justice-led benches," he urged.

However, the court said it could not pass such sweeping orders as the constitution of benches was the prerogative of the Chief Justice of the high court. "We cannot demoralise the high courts," it said.

At this, Mehta said, "Health infrastructure can never be ignored. But these directions are impossible to comply with... we understand the anxiety of the court. But this is a matter of concern. Courts should also have some judicial restraint and not pass orders which are difficult to implement."

NO STAY ON FURTHER PROCEEDINGS

"We are staying the order but we are not staying the proceedings before the Allahabad High Court. The matter be listed on July 14," the Supreme Court bench said while appointing senior advocate Nidesh Gupta as amicus curiae to assist in the matter

A doctor treats a patient infected with mucormycosis at the NSCB Medical College and Hospital in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, on Friday | PTI

Need thorough study

A senior doctor at AIIMS, Delhi said she has been treating autoimmune disease patients with steroids for years, but mucormycosis cases were rare. "Something has changed now. Whether it is the use of industrial oxygen or the way oxygen has been instituted in health facilities, I am not sure. That is for researchers to find out."

No white fungus cases in state: Docs

CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

WHILE black fungus has been elevated to epidemic status, a new kind of fungal infection – termed as 'white fungus' – has been reported in Patna, Bihar. But experts said that no such cases have been seen in Karnataka so far.

They claimed that fungal infections have been reported among many immunocompromised patients, especially those who have recovered from Covid after staying in ICUs. "Just as mucormycosis has been loosely called 'black fungus', other fungal infections, for example, superficial and invasive candidiasis, invasive aspergillosis, etc, are now being termed as 'white fungus'. Though we used to see them in patients with very low immunity, cancers and those who have undergone organ transplant, there is a sudden rise of these infections in Covid-recovered patients due to widespread use of steroids. Other factors, including hygiene, may also be responsible. These infections are generally difficult to treat. The famous adage 'prevention is better than cure' is apt in this situation," said Shashikiran Umakanth, Professor & Head, Department of Medicine, Dr TMA Pai Hospital, Manipal University.

Dr Ravindra Mehra, Pulmonologist, Apollo Hospitals, said that Apollo Hospitals saw 10-15 aspergillosis patients over the last few weeks and it is usually caused by inhaling aspergillus spores. P4

CENTRE AIDING STATE IN FUNGAL FIGHT

Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilisers DV Sadananda Gowda on Friday said the Centre is aiming to meet Karnataka's demand with regard to black fungus. "The state has received 1,660 vials of Amphotericin-B so far...," Sadananda Gowda informed. P4

Industrial O_2 tied to black fungus spurt?

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

AT the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (MGIMS) in Sevagram in Wardha, a major tertiary care centre in rural Maharashtra, nearly 4,000 Covid-19 patients had undergone treatment before March this year. None developed mucormycosis, a deadly fungal disease that is posing a fresh challenge to the healthcare system in India.

Beginning April through the first week of May, when nearly 1,000 Covid patients were treated at MGIMS, 20 of them went on to develop mucormycosis, which has a reported fatality rate of nearly 50%. At present, the hospital has at least 15 patients of black fungus, in which a group of molds infect sinuses, lungs and the brain.

Raymond Savio, a critical care expert from Chennai, explains that there are multiple reasons for this fungus to infect those with Covid-19. "It's a combination of the virus, nature of treatment, steroid and other immune-suppressants, nature of body's response to Covid infection (ferritin level), uncontrolled blood sugar and humidification systems for oxygen that makes it appropriate for the spores to infect patients," he said.

The sudden and unprecedented rise in mucormycosis cases, however, has prompted S P Kalantri, a senior doctor and medical researcher at MGIMS, like many others in different parts of India, to question whether the popular perception that indiscriminate use of steroids, suppressed immunity, history of diabetes and unhygienic conditions in ICUs may be triggering this spurt in cases.

"It's my assumption and I may be completely wrong, but maybe Covid-19 virus and mucor are now hunting together. Something about the Covid-19 virus has changed over the months," he said, adding that more research is required to understand the rise in the disease. CONTINUED ON: P8

RBI hands out generous dividend amounting to 0.5% of GDP to govt

SESA SEN @ New Delhi

THE Reserve Bank of India on Friday sprang a pleasant surprise for the Centre, announcing a handsome dividend of ₹99,122 crore for FY22. Constituting 0.5% of the GDP, this is more than double the Budget estimate of ₹45,000 crore and comes as a major relief for the government reeling under strained public finances owing to the pandemic.

The surplus transfer will help the Centre provide more pandemic relief measures.

However, RBI's generosity may not be enough. In FY22, the government expenditure is set at ₹34.83 lakh crore. Revenues may come in at ₹16.5 lakh crore. So, the government will still have to raise ₹1.75 lakh crore via disinvestments to pursue its FY22 fiscal deficit target of 6.8% of the GDP.

RBI's surprise handout may have been driven by higher returns from domestic assets. "RBI recently allowed itself to book profits on its forex transactions from a weighted average cost perspective. This move could have helped the central bank boost yields on its foreign asset holdings. Increased holdings of domestic government securities likely further amplified RBI's income," said Rahul Bajoria, Chief India Economist, Barclays.

According to Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist at ICRA, the higher transfer will offer a buffer to the Centre to absorb the losses in indirect tax revenues that are anticipated in May-June 2021 due to the localised lockdowns.

RBI transfer

Year	Dividend (₹ cr)
FY14	33,010
FY15	52,679
FY16	65,876
FY17	65,876
FY18	30,659
FY19	50,000
FY20	1,75,987
FY21	52,128
FY22	99,122*

*RBI is transitioning to April-March accounting year (earlier July-June). Hence, FY22 is a 9-month year (July '20- March '21)

Source: RBI

INSOLVENCY CODE

Promoters liable for their companies' debt, rules SC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

IN what may make high-profile corporate honchos such as Anil Ambani personally liable for the loans their companies have taken but not repaid, the Supreme Court on Friday upheld the constitutional validity of the Centre's November 15, 2019 circular that brought personal guarantors of corporate loans under the ambit of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.

The verdict has come as a major boost for banks, which can now seek recovery of dues from the promoter guarantors even while bankruptcy processes against the companies are pending. The order came on a plea by industrialists Anil Ambani, Kapil Wadhawan, Sanjay Singhal, and Venugopal Dhoot – whose firms are facing insolvency proceedings – challenging the 2019 notification.

According to the promoters, the Centre targeted them though the law was for individuals, corporate guarantors as well as partnership firms. The SC held that the government's intent was to implement the provisions of the IBC in a phased manner. CONTINUED ON: P10

NOBLE DUTY

Volleyball player hoists cylinders for the needy, wins hearts

G SUBHASH CHANDRA @ Davanagere

HABEEBUNISSA may be just 19, with limited resources, but has displayed grit and initiative. As Davanagere locked itself in to stave off the Covid second wave, this young woman ventured out to help the needy.

The international volleyball player has been winning hearts, especially after a video of her carrying an oxygen cylinder on her brother's bike went viral last week. The patient in distress had got a bed at CG Hospital, but there was no oxygen, and the family was asked to source a cylinder. She swung into action, collected the cylinder and rushed to hospital. She is glad that the patient survived. She went on to arrange four more cylinders.

HOPE FLOATS

The daughter of an autorickshaw driver, Mohammed Jabir, Habeebunissa has been active on many fronts – distributing masks, arranging for oxygen and blood, and even cooking food for stranded nomadic families. She and her mother used the PDS grains that her family gets to cook the meals.

"It is our duty to save humanity from the clutches of the Covid-19. The Youth Congress is funding my initiative to provide cylinders and other social work, with some contribution from my father," she said. As vice-president of the Youth Congress Davanagere unit, she has also motivated many girls to take up sports and develop leadership skills.

She is doing her final year ITI (electrical) at Millat College in Davanagere and is an ace volleyball player. Her father Jabir, who earns ₹800 per day, and almost nothing since the lockdown kicked in, says he is happy that his daughter is using whatever he gives her to help society.

Habeebunissa en route to deliver an oxygen cylinder to the needy | EXPRESS

EXPRESS READ

Goa court acquits journalist Tarun Tejpal

Panaji: A sessions court in Goa on Friday acquitted journalist and former Tehelka editor-in-chief Tarun Tejpal of sexually assaulting a former female colleague.

Mamata may contest from home turf

Kolkata: West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee is likely to contest from her old bastion, Bhabanipur, after minister Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay vacated the seat, sources said.